

Spouses offer miles of support for deployment

Story and photo by
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Residents of the U.S. Army Garrison Bamberg community are being asked to lace up their shoes and get ready to put in the miles by participating in Operation Walk 4 Freedom.

Over 50 spouses, many with children in tow, gathered last week at the Bamberg Freedom Fitness Facility track to show their support for a community-wide health initiative beginning in June.

"The objective of the program is to accumulate enough miles in one year to equal the distance to Afghanistan, or Iraq or wherever your loved ones or friends may be deployed, through walking, running or other activities," explained Angela Hunter, the Bamberg Health Promotion coordinator.

From Bamberg, that's approximately 3,245 miles one way to Afghanistan and 2,000 to Iraq.

When asked how far she would walk to see her Soldier downrange Lauren Kemp, 173rd Special Troops Battalion spouse said, "Forever, ... screaming kids and all, even to see him for only one minute."

Speaking from experience, Kemp said this is their fourth deployment, and a program like this motivates her to keep going, physically and mentally.

The spouses overwhelmingly agree that the program is a motivator for getting active and staying active during a stressful year.

"There are so many excuses you can use for not working out, and this program gets you up, out and going," said spouse Valerie Wells.

"It's definitely a stress reliever for me" said Susy Roe, a 4th Bn., 319th Field Artillery Regt. spouse, who plans to log most of her miles with her Family Readiness Group by walking, biking, and rollerblading.

Roe and Wells said they are confident they will complete the miles and are ready for the challenge.

Hunter explained the health benefits of participation as seen in the results from the 2004 program.

"Past participants showed increased energy levels, mental awareness, and an increased ability to cope and manage stress," she said.

The distance can seem daunting at first but with the use of a pedometer, walkers can accumulate miles all day while going about their regular routine



Spouses of deployed Soldiers walk, run, bike, or rollerblade in support of troops in Iraq or Afghanistan, and encourage the entire Bamberg community to join them. (Photo by Amy L. Bugala)

of walking the dog, chasing after the kids or running errands she explained to the group. Quarterly Walk 4 Freedom community sponsored events will be offered to give participants an opportunity to earn double miles.

All participants who register for the program during the Operation Walk 4 Freedom assessments will receive a free pedometer, log book, and assistance with goal setting,

fitness, and exercise plans.

Assessments will be conducted at the Freedom Fitness Facility June 12 from 9 a.m. to noon, and June 13 from noon to 3 p.m. and 4:30 to 7 p.m. The last day for screenings will be June 14 from 9 a.m. to noon.

The assessment includes a weight, blood pressure, and heart rate check, a body fat assessment, and a flexibility and cardiovascular step test. Registering also includes a six month

mid-term assessment and post assessment in June 2008.

Anyone can participate and log miles beginning June 1 as an individual, family, FRG, or other type of team.

Hunter expects participation levels this year to be close to 700 people.

For more information, call DSN 469-7043 or e-mail Bamberg-Health-Promotion@cmty@mail.98.asg.army.mil.